Shattered Lens: Part 2 – Abusing Sport for Propaganda

BY **HONEST837REPORTING** - DECEMBER 9, 2010

In the first part of our study, we examined how the topic of the Gaza flotilla was cynically exploited by photographers and caption writers to draw negative attention to unrelated aspects of Israel. In the cases we profile here, the topic of the soccer / football World Cup is used in much the same way.

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Our Findings:

- **The 2010 FIFA World Cup was cynically used by wire service photojournalists to publish photos that impact negatively on Israel.**
- **The soccer theme was deliberately employed as an artificial means to draw attention to Israel's security barrier in the absence of a legitimate story.**
- **Editorialized captions drew a false linkage between sport and politics.**

Soccer has recently been in the news as the rights to host the 2018 and 2022 FIFA World Cups were awarded to Russia and Qatar respectively. All of the bidding nations emphasized how sport and soccer, in particular, could provide a setting for the breaking down of barriers.

HonestReporting's photo study, which ran from May 31 to August 31, included the month from June 11 to July 11 of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, a sporting festival where images of different nations, cultures, colors and religions coming together to celebrate soccer dominated the international media.

Except in Israel and the Palestinian territories and despite a common love of soccer shared by Israelis and Palestinians alike. Here, wire service photographers set out to portray Israel in a negative light by deliberately abusing the sporting theme to do.

The symbolism in the first photo of this section is self-explanatory. It is certainly not a spontaneous shot captured by a lucky photographer, but another example of the staging that dominates imagery produced by the wire services operating in the Palestinian territories.

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Title:	A protestor issues a soccer 'red card' t
Caption:	A protestor issues a soccer 'red card' to Israeli soldiers as Israeli, foreign and Palestinians demonstrate against the demolishing of farm land to be used in the construction of Jewish settlements near the existing Israeli settlement of Karmi Tsor just north of the Palestinian West Bank town of Hebron on June 19, 2010. AFP PHOTO/HAZEM BADER (Photo credit should read HAZEM BADER/AFP/Getty Images)

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The image below, using an editorialized caption, takes the football theme and talks about how:

“football fans escape the Gaza Strip’s dreary confinement to follow the WC2010 matches which are often interrupted by power cuts.”

Title:	TO GO WITH AFP STORY BY MAI YAGHI A Pla
Caption:	TO GO WITH AFP STORY BY MAI YAGHI A Plaestinian youth checks his laptop while watching a World Cup 2010 match on a big screen at an outdoors cafe in Gaza City on June 20, 2010, as football fans escape the Gaza Strip's dreary confinement to follow the WC2010 matches which are often interrupted by power cuts. AFP PHOTO/MOHAMMED ABED (Photo credit should read MOHAMMED ABED/AFP/Getty Images)

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The following images all incorporate Israel's security barrier into the football theme. Indeed, for a number of these photos, there is no actual story other than an excuse to publish negative images of the security barrier. Where an identifiable event is taking place, as in the final photo taken at a Palestinian demonstration, it is clear how the Palestinians employ propaganda tools such as the goal post, which are snapped up by the photographers.

Title: Grafitti showing a goal post with a goal

Caption: Grafitti showing a goal post with a goalie reaching for a football and the words 'Freedom is through football' is seen painted on a section of the controversial Israeli separation barrier in the West Bank village of Abu Dis, on the outskirts of Jerusalem on June 8, 2010. AFP PHOTO/MARCO LONGARI (Photo credit should read MARCO LONGARI/AFP/Getty Images)

Title: Palestinian boys play football on a scho

Caption: Palestinian boys play football on a school pitch in front of the controversial Israel separation barrier in the West Bank village of Anata, on the outskirts of Jerusalem on June 8, 2010. AFP PHOTO/MARCO LONGARI (Photo credit should read MARCO LONGARI/AFP/Getty Images)

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Title:	A young Palestinian goal keeper plays at
Caption:	A young Palestinian goal keeper plays at a football pitch next to controversial Israeli separation barrier in the West Bank village of Abu Dis, on the outskirts of Jerusalem on June 8, 2010. AFP PHOTO/MARCO LONGARI (Photo credit should read MARCO LONGARI/AFP/Getty Images)

While the caption in the photo below acknowledges that the Palestinian boy is posing for the camera i.e. the image is staged, the choice of backdrop is an indicator of the photographer's agenda. The security barrier has been chosen as opposed to a more neutral setting such as a open area or football field.

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Title: A Palestinian boy poses with his footbal

Caption: A Palestinian boy poses with his football in front of a section of the controversial Israeli separation barrier at a football pitch in the Anata School in the West Bank village of Anata, on the outskirts of Jerusalem on June 8, 2010. AFP PHOTO/MARCO LONGARI (Photo credit should read MARCO LONGARI/AFP/Getty Images)

FILE - In this Friday, June 11, 2010 file photo, Palestinian protesters set up a goalpost to play soccer as part of a demonstration against **Israel's** separation barrier at the West Bank village of Bilin, near Ramallah. In a part of the world where people often have little in common, World Cup fever has created some interesting alliances. Without their own representatives in South Africa, Israelis and Palestinians are embracing international squads with the sort of unspent passion usually reserved for the home team. (AP Photo/Nasser Shiyoukhi, File)

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A look at the photos above reveals that Israel is does not have the benefit of a level playing field when it comes to AP, AFP/Getty and Reuters. Until now, nobody has assigned a referee to ensure fair play. As such, HonestReporting gives red cards to the wire service photographers for their biased and slanted coverage of Israel and the Palestinian territories.

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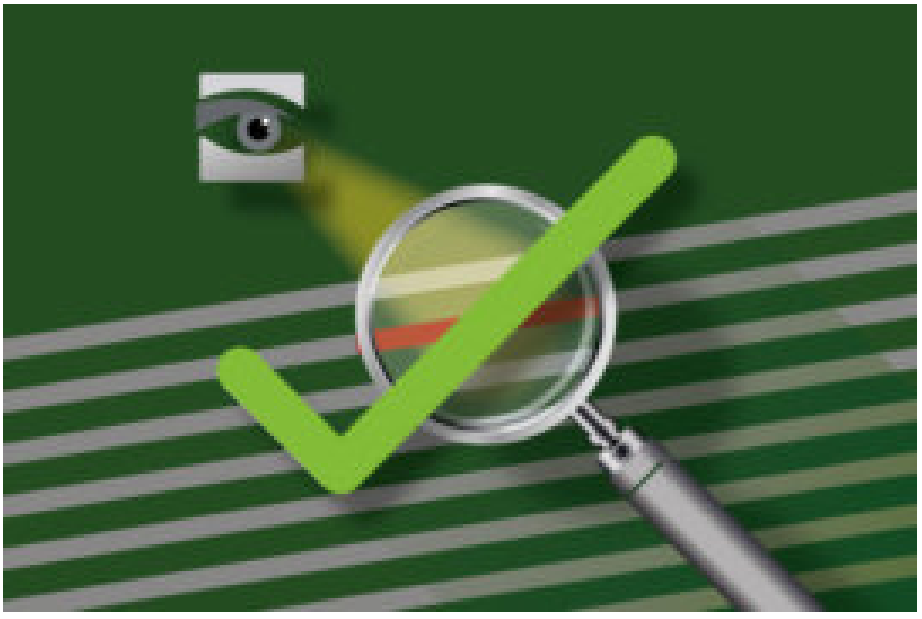

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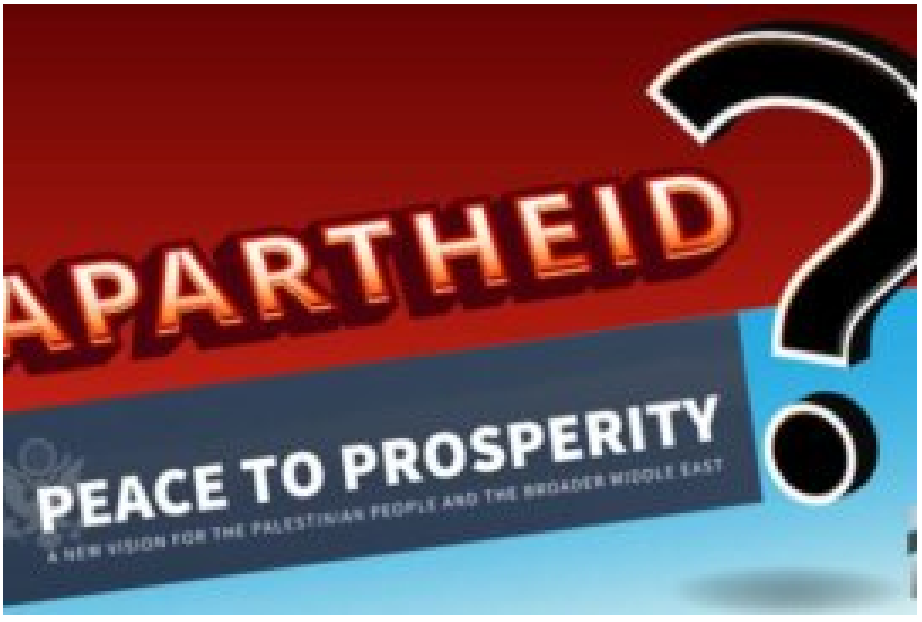

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